ACTUAL GRACE

E. TOWERS

The Treasury of the Faith Series: 17

General Editor:
THE REV. GEORGE D. SMITH, PH.D., D.D.,
Professor of Dogmatic Theology at St. Edmund's College, Old Hall

ACTUAL GRACE

The MC Co.

ACTUAL GRACE

By

THE REV. E. TOWERS
PH.D., D.D.
PROFESSOR OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY AT ST. CUTHBERT'S COLLEGE, USHAW

St. Albert's College Library

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1928

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

NIHIL OBSTAT

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.,

Censor Librorum

IMPRIMATUR

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES,

Archbishop, New York

New York, June 14, 1928

COPYRIGHT, 1928,
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Set up and electrotyped.
Published, September, 1928.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BY
STRATFORD PRESS, INC.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTORY NOTIONS	1
II.	THE NECESSITY OF GRACE FOR THE AVOIDING OF SIN	13
III.	THE NECESSITY OF GRACE FOR GAINING ETERNAL LIFE	26
IV.	ACTUAL GRACE A FREE GIFT OF GOD . .	39
V.	SUFFICIENT ACTUAL GRACE FOR ALL . .	50
VI.	THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF ACTUAL GRACE	64
	APPENDIX: SOME MATTERS OF CONTROVERSY AMONGST CATHOLICS	75

1427

ACTUAL GRACE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY NOTIONS

Our dependence on God—False ideas—Two sources of weakness—Corresponding graces—Definition of Actual Grace.

It is of fundamental importance for the right ordering of our lives that we should realize our spiritual weakness. In many of the ordinary affairs of life a spirit of self-reliance is essential for success, and men often lag behind in the keen struggle of this busy world because they have not sufficient confidence in themselves. But in spiritual matters the truth is just the other way; it is the self-confident man that fails and the man who distrusts himself that succeeds. When the Catechism told us that "we can do no good work of ourselves towards our salvation" it was expressing a profound truth with literal exactness, not uttering a pious exaggeration. And if we do not recognize this fact we are in danger of spiritual ruin. He that thinketh himself to stand must take heed lest he fall.

In speaking thus of our personal insufficiency we are not thinking merely of our natural dependence, as creatures, upon the sustaining hand of God. Every creature depends upon God, not only for its continued existence, but also for every exercise of its natural powers of action. We cannot lift a finger unless God, who is the First Cause and the First Mover, acts with us. But it is not this which we are here considering. Over and above God's concurrence with our ordinary actions there is need of his special assistance in the working out of our salvation, in such wise that if he did not give us this assistance we should most certainly perish. In a word, we need actual grace, which for the moment we will define as a supernatural help given by God for the special purpose of enabling us to perform some particular act which tends towards our salvation.

Our need of actual grace is far greater than even Catholics are at first inclined to believe; in fact, if there is any matter of faith in which it is easy to fall unconsciously into views which are in themselves heretical, that matter is our dependence upon the supernatural assistance of God. We give ourselves credit for more than we can do by our own unaided powers.

It was in the early part of the fifth century that the Church was first compelled to face the whole question of the necessity of grace. The controversy arose out of the teaching of a

British monk named Pelagius who appeared in Italy in the first years of that century and soon attracted a good deal of notice. St Augustine, who was to be his chief opponent, speaks of him with respect, and he seems to have been an austere and zealous man, a practical director of souls rather than a deep theologian. He had no patience with people who distrusted themselves and for ever cried to God for help in a spirit of helplessness; he considered all this a mark of indolence and of unwillingness to make a vigorous and persevering effort for oneself. Bestir yourself, he said in effect; harden the will; learn self-discipline; watch your evil tendencies; you are "master of your fate, captain of your soul"; if you fall it is your own fault and you have only yourself to blame.

All this sounded very well, but there were some who raised objections. Surely, they said, Pelagius is ignoring the fall of Man, and the sad consequences involved in it for all the human race; our nature is wounded and both the Scriptures and the Fathers rightly stress the need under which we labour of the help of God. Reasoning such as this Pelagius and his followers unhesitatingly swept aside. Adam's sin, they declared, did not harm us except by the bad example which it set; our nature is not fundamentally evil, and man can keep from sin by the unaided power of his will; grace comes in to make things easier for us, not to deliver us

from impossibilities. They were willing to concede that in order that we may do all that God requires of us we need the external help of revelation, which makes known to us many of his commands; but, given this knowledge through revelation, we can accomplish our task, and save our souls, by ourselves.

These issues were too serious to be ignored, and for a considerable time the western world resounded with the echoes of the controversy. And, as in other vicissitudes of his Church, God had a champion at hand in the person of the great St Augustine of Hippo who has been justly called the Doctor of Grace. From the first he saw the far-reaching consequences of these theories of the British monk and forthwith he set himself to meet the danger. The struggle was long drawn out and lasted beyond the lifetime of the saint, but it was he who dealt Pelagianism its death-blow.

It will be seen that the issues raised by Pelagius were of far-reaching and very practical importance. They involved such questions as the nature of the Fall, Original Sin, and the Redemption; our dependence upon Christ; the efficacy of the Sacrament; the power of the human will. Indeed, this question of the necessity of grace is one which shows in a very striking way how a number of different dogmas which at first sight might seem to have little relation one with another are in reality mutually

dependent; and how a wonderful harmony runs through all God's dealings with men as seen in the revelation which he has given to his Church. This harmony of doctrine with doctrine is in itself no insignificant argument for the divine authorship of that body of doctrine of which the Catholic Church is the custodian.

In some of the chapters which follow it will be our business to set out in some detail the more important ways in which we need the divine assistance, but before proceeding to this more detailed study it will be helpful if we glance for a moment at two sources of our weakness. If we bear these two sources in mind we shall find it more easy to realize how great is our dependence on the supernatural assistance of God.

First, then, there is the fact that we possess a fallen nature. When God created our first parents he gave them what is known as the gift of integrity. In virtue of this gift the animal part of man was subjected to the spiritual. All his actions were ruled by reason, and the lower passions did not rebel; perfect harmony prevailed. But this gift was lost by the sin of Adam, and lost not only for Adam himself, but also for us. Henceforth a constant strife was to go on in the heart of every man, the lower rising up in opposition to the higher, the carnal against the spiritual. St Paul has spoken of this strife in a passage which has become famous even amongst non-believers. "I know that there dwelleth not

in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will is present with me; but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. Now if I do that which I will not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord."[1]

Here we have one important source of our weakness. It would be possible, indeed, to exaggerate the difficulty and to look upon human nature as essentially and hopelessly corrupt. That was what Luther did when he taught that our nature has become so corrupt, so odious in the sight of God, that all our acts are sinful, tainted in their source. But, whilst avoiding extreme views such as this, we are forced to

[1] Rom. vii 18-25. In the Westminster Version, edited by Fr. Lattey, S. J., the last sentence is rendered: "Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Authorized as well as the Revised Version has: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The Douai Version used in the text follows the Latin of the Vulgate, which would seem to be based on an inferior Greek text. The sense is ultimately the same, and the Douai Version has been retained both here and elsewhere.

realize that in the loss of the gift of integrity there is a source of immense difficulty, from which we can be delivered only through "the grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

The second source of our weakness is not so obvious as this rebellion of the lower part of man against the higher, but it is of even greater importance for a true understanding of our proper condition. To put it in somewhat technical terms, which we shall at once proceed to explain, all our natural efforts are inadequate because God has ordained that we should aim at the possession of a supernatural object, and should live in a supernatural order of things. Since the object to be attained and the order of things in which we are to live are supernatural, it follows necessarily that our natural efforts are insufficient; by the very nature of the case we need supernatural help. To explain.

In a verse which gloriously expresses the wonders of our Christian calling, St John says: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is."[1] Here two great truths are put before us, viz., that we are destined for the Beatific Vision and that we who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ are already the Sons of God. "As many as received him, he gave them power

[1] 1 John iii 2.

to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name."[1] But the Beatific Vision is something to which no creature, human or angelical, can attain by its own unaided power. God lives in light inaccessible. The object, then, which is set before us is absolutely beyond our grasp, as far as our natural powers are concerned; no effort of our own, no matter how intense or how prolonged, could bring us within the possibility of reaching it. God, however, has freely chosen so to raise our nature above itself that we shall see him as he is. And that is not all: not only has he chosen to raise us up to the Beatific Vision, but already in this mortal life he has so elevated our nature that "we are now the sons of God"; sons of God, not in some metaphorical sense, not merely in so far as every creature may be called the son of God because it is his handiwork, but sons of God through a change which he has wrought in us whereby we are made to share his very nature. St Peter dares to say that "he hath given us most great and precious promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature."[2]

It is of the greatest importance that we should realize this higher life to which the Christian is raised and the wholly supernatural character of that Beatific Vision to which we are called. Such a realization is wonderfully ennobling. But what is of more direct interest for us here is the

[1] John i 12. [2] Pet. i 4.

light which it throws on the question of our dependence on God. Obviously a creature who is made a partaker of the divine nature and a Son of God, and who is striving to attain the glory of the Beatific Vision, must be absolutely dependent upon God. We could more easily live our natural life without air than this supernatural life without God's grace.

In the light of these general principles it will be evident that we need the help of God both to save us from falling into sin and also to enable us to ascend to the performance of the actions which belong to our new life as sons of God. Our weak nature has to be healed, our lowly nature uplifted. Hence what theologians call medicinal or healing grace (*gratia medicinalis*, or *sanans*) and elevating grace (*gratia elevans*), the one to save us from our sinful tendencies, the other to lift us up to a life with God. The elevation of our nature to the divine sonship is actually accomplished by that wonderful reality which we call Habitual, or Sanctifying, Grace; that is to say, by a real quality infused into the soul and making it Godlike—a quality which is of a permanent character, to be destroyed only by sin. With sanctifying, or habitual, grace we are not here directly concerned—the object of our study being not the permanent supernatural gifts of God to the soul, but the passing helps by which he comes to our assistance in the performance of various actions. It is to these pass-

ing helps that we give the name Actual Grace.

A reference has just been made to the grace which heals and the grace which elevates, and this distinction helps to explain the work of grace in the soul; but it may be well to point out that these are not necessarily two distinct things. A grace which heals may at the same time elevate our faculties to the supernatural order of action. In all probability this is generally the case, and thus "healing" and "elevating" are but two effects of one and the same grace. The distinction has been mentioned here because it helps to bring out the general ideas which we are explaining on the necessity of grace.

In technical works of theology various divisions of actual grace are given which lie outside the very limited scope of the present little work; but there is one division the explanation of which will help towards a fuller understanding of our subject. Theologians distinguish between external and internal graces. External graces are gifts of God which are outside ourselves, such as the message of the Gospel, the example of Christ and the saints, the external circumstances of our lives; internal graces are influences exercised by God within us, such as impulses towards good and lights on eternal truths. Of course, these two kinds of grace are often connected, the external grace being the medium, or the occasion, for the giving of the internal;

but they are obviously different in kind, and the distinction is important. In what follows we shall retain the name Actual Grace for interior grace, so that when we assert the necessity of actual grace, we mean to deny the sufficiency of merely external grace.

After these various explanations we can amplify the definition of actual grace which was given earlier on. We said that actual grace is a supernatural help given by God for the special purpose of enabling us to perform some particular action which tends towards our salvation; we may now say, more fully, that it is a supernatural gift, internal to us and of a passing nature, whereby God helps us to avoid sin, or enables us to perform actions which tend towards eternal life.

And now we pass to the consideration of the necessity of actual grace. In this matter human reason alone is an insufficient guide; we must rely on the revelation which God in his mercy has made to us, and on the infallible teaching of the Church. When the Catholic doctrine on the necessity of grace has been set before us we may be inclined to feel that the position is one of despair, so great is our weakness seen to be; but further thought will lead us to a very different conclusion. It will make us see the grandeur of that wonderful scheme of Redemption whereby Christ our Lord came to our assistance, and of that equally wonderful scheme

of a Church which, with its Sacraments and other means of grace, was to be an ark of salvation to us; so that we can rejoice in that very weakness of ours which has called forth such an exhibition of loving kindness on the part of God. The thought of our weakness would indeed be terrifying if there were no strong hand to hold us; but when we know that the arm of God is about us, fear gives place to confidence and love. "He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven. He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my protector, and my refuge: my God, in him will I trust."[1]

[1] Ps. 90, 1-2.

CHAPTER II

THE NECESSITY OF GRACE FOR THE AVOIDING OF SIN

Inability to observe the Natural Law—Moral not physical impossibility—Position of the sinner—Avoidance of venial sin.

CAN a man keep from sin without the special help of God? As we have seen, the Pelagians declared that he can; it is simply a matter of the right use of our free will, they maintained, and to deny that we can keep from sin without grace is nothing less than a denial that we are free. Yet the Church teaches just the opposite and warns us that if we are to keep from sin, we must rely on the grace of God, without whose aid we shall most certainly fall. It is this teaching which we are to explain in the present chapter.

First of all, we will consider the following question: If a man lives apart from God, and receives no grace from him, can he keep the whole of the natural law? Notice that we are limiting our question to the *natural* law—in other words, to that moral law which every nor-

mal man recognizes by the light of his reason and the dictates of his conscience; we leave out of account altogether that positive law which God has given to us through revelation. Further, our question has reference to the *whole* of the natural law. We are not suggesting that any of the dictates of the natural law, taken singly, are beyond the power of unaided nature; that would clearly be untrue, for we have plenty of evidence of men without faith in God who avoid such offences against the natural law as drunkenness and dishonesty. No, we are referring to the whole of the natural law. Moreover, we are not going to maintain that the natural law cannot be observed for at any rate a short time; we are thinking now of the possibility of a long-continued period in which the whole of the moral law is observed, and we deny the possibility of such a thing. A man may, indeed, go on for some time—how long we do not pretend to say—without serious fault, but he cannot succeed indefinitely; sooner or later there will be a serious fall in regard to one or other of the obligations which the natural law lays upon us all, of which we are all conscious.

If we were to examine this question simply from what our own reason and experience tell us of life, we might not be justified in making the bold statement that there is absolutely no one who can keep the whole of the moral law without the help of God. The sight of so much

evil, even amongst men who believe in God and profess some form of religion, might make us pause, and an analysis of the tendencies of the human heart might make us feel that sooner or later, in one way or another, by sin of the spirit if not by sin of the flesh, men will fail to observe perfectly the dictates of the moral law; but would this justify us in saying universally that without divine grace no man can avoid evil? Probably not; and therefore it is not by appeal to reason, but on the authority of God's revealed word, that Catholic theology bases its assertion of man's moral incapacity. And the passage on which we chiefly rely has already been quoted. It occurs in the seventh chapter of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and requires very careful reading.

In the first chapter of this epistle St Paul paints in vivid colours the moral degradation into which the pagan world had fallen, and in the seventh chapter he speaks of the wretched condition even of the man who has the advantage of the Jewish Law. That law, he asserts, was an occasion of sin; for by forbidding things, it created a desire for them: "sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence";[1] but it did not give any internal help to compensate. Hence the Jew living under the law finds it impossible to keep altogether from sin. "The good which I will,

[1] Rom. vii 8.

I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do."[1] There is only one means of escape; and that is, the grace of God.[2]

Such is the thought of St Paul; and the only conclusion which we can draw from it is that without the help of God which comes to us through Christ it is impossible to keep from sin. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath delivered me from the law of sin and of death."[3]

On the strength of this teaching of St Paul, and supported by the authority of earlier Christian writers who in various ways insisted upon man's natural weakness, the champions of Catholic orthodoxy against the teaching of Pelagius strenuously maintained the necessity of help from God if a man is to keep from sin,

[1] Rom. vii 19. [2] Rom. vii 25.

[3] Rom. viii 2. For a fuller exposition of the teaching of St Paul in this important and very difficult passage, the reader is referred to a Catholic commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (*e.g.*, Cornely in Latin, Lagrange in French, Callan in English), or to the careful discussion of the matter in Prat, *The Theology of St Paul*, vol. I, p. 224 *seq.* It is generally admitted that where St Paul speaks in the first person he is not directly alluding to himself; it would seem that he is speaking in the character of a Jew living under the Jewish law. Towards the end of his life St Augustine preferred to think that, at least in the later verses, St Paul was speaking in the person of a Christian regenerated by Baptism, but still under the influence of concupiscence. If this interpretation be followed we get a still clearer proof of the necessity of grace. Lagrange, followed by Callan, understands St Paul to be speaking of man in the state of innocence. In any case, we get the same conclusion—namely, that without the grace of God man is so much under the dominion of concupiscence that he inevitably falls into sin.

and, although the Church has never defined the matter in so many words, there can be no doubt that this is the only true doctrine, and that it would be a grievous error for anyone to deny it. Yet it is open to some serious objections which the Pelagians were quick to seize upon. If we cannot keep the moral law without the help of God, how (it may be asked) can we logically maintain that man is free? Surely, if man *must* sin, he has no freedom in the matter. And if he is not free, but impelled by necessity to evil action, how can he be said to commit sin—since sin implies freedom to abstain from wrong? Pelagius himself put the difficulty in the form of a neat dilemma. "Is sin a thing which can be avoided, or a thing which cannot be avoided? If it cannot be avoided, it is no sin; and if it can be avoided, man can be without it."

To meet this objection theologians introduce an important distinction between a *physical* impossibility and a *moral* impossibility. There is a physical impossibility when the means which are physically necessary for the doing of a thing are absent: thus, it is physically impossible for a blind man to see, and for a fish to walk. Now, it will be at once evident that when a man labours under a physical impossibility, he is not free to act or not to act. A blind man is not free to see or not just as he wishes; he is under a physical necessity not to see. Consequently, if

we were to say that it is physically impossible for a man to keep from sin without the help of God, we should at the same time be denying his liberty, and there would be no escape from the dilemma of Pelagius. But the matter is very different if the impossibility of which there is question is a moral, not a physical, impossibility; for in the case of a moral impossibility the means which are physically necessary for doing a thing are indeed present, but the difficulty in the way of using those means is so great that failure is ultimately inevitable. Take the case of a man who is firing at a target. If he has not a rifle with sufficient range to reach the target it is clearly a physical impossibility for him to hit his mark. But suppose that the target is within his range: can he go on indefinitely hitting the centre every time he fires, in all conditions of wind and weather? We should have no hesitation in saying that this is so difficult as to be morally impossible. Each time he takes up the rifle it is possible for him to succeed, but we are sure that sooner or later he will fail.

Apply this to the question of the perfect fulfilment of the moral law. In every single vicissitude of life it may be physically possible for a man to observe that right order of conduct which the moral law requires, so that in each case as it arises he is free in his action; and yet (we assert) he is sure ultimately to make a mistake. In other words, it is a moral impossibility

for him to observe the whole of the natural law. He may do many things which are morally good; he may show great moral courage in resisting various attacks of evil; but sooner or later he will fall, not through want of freedom, not through anything which makes it impossible to continue any longer in the course of right action, but through instability.

It is to be noted that the moral impossibility of which we speak has reference, not to any one particular act considered by itself, but to a continuance of action. Thus we are not saying that a time comes when a man is faced by a difficulty which he cannot overcome; we are simply saying that as a matter of fact a time will certainly come when a mistake will be made. When that time comes the man will have the power of succeeding—otherwise he would not be free—but he will fail to use that power.

In what has preceded we have been thinking of a man as he is apart from the grace of God, and our conclusion is altogether opposed to the possibility of what we may call natural goodness. Non-religious ethical training must, in consequence, be pronounced a sad delusion; it may, indeed, serve to teach some forms of self-restraint, and it may also contribute to develop some of the nobler qualities which lie deep in the human heart; but it cannot arm a man against all his enemies and give him the strength he needs in every conflict. And here we have one

of the dangers of purely secular systems of education. Not by such means will humanity be made sound: we have need of Christ and his grace.

It is worthy of special notice that St Paul clearly requires more than actual grace in order that a man may be preserved from sin; he requires incorporation in Christ—in other words, sanctifying grace. It is "the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus," which "hath delivered me from the law of sin and of death."[1] Actual grace, indeed, is required in order that we may be upheld and strengthened in the hour of conflict, but we are given to understand that this help will not be given unceasingly except to those who "put on" Christ; they who reject him cannot expect that the graces which belong to the sons of God will be extended to them. And this leads us to stress the important point that the man who has fallen from grace and lives in sin will most certainly fall into further sin. There is no such thing as committing one grave sin and then standing still: a man must either come back to God or come still more under the dominion of evil. If it is only by incorporation in Christ that I escape from that "law in my members fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members,"[2] then when I reject Christ by mortal sin I pass once more under "the law of

[1] Rom. viii 2. [2] Rom. vii 23.

sin." A little thought will show how this must be so. When a man sins he sets up for himself other gods. He makes his own will the end which he chooses, in contempt of God. In this state of glorified self-will—although it is not true, as Luther would have it, that all his acts are sinful—he is unable to resist the many evil influences which assail him. His efforts are doomed to failure because his will is wrong; the compass by which he directs his life is at fault, and other sins will follow. The only way in which he can recover his power of successful resistance to the forces of evil is by turning once more to God; he must set his will right and become again a living member of that Body of Christ outside of which there is no true life.

But—and here we see once more how terrible is the position of the sinner and how great is our dependence on God—he cannot return to God without divine grace. True, there is something in man which gives him a natural disgust with grosser forms of sin, and even the most abandoned may not be altogether free from occasional desires to escape from some of the more degrading vices; but this is far removed from such a sorrow for sin as will win back the friendship of God. Perfect charity, which blots out sin even before reception of the sacrament of Penance, is clearly beyond the unaided powers of the sinner, as will be seen more clearly in our next chapter; and even attrition, which

would be sufficient to obtain forgiveness in the tribunal of Penance, is impossible without grace. The second Council of Orange, held in 529, made all this clear when it condemned those who maintained that God awaits the movement of repentance in the heart of the sinner, and that the desire to be free from sin is our own work, and not the work of the Holy Spirit. Any movement of disgust with sin and of desire for a better life which a man may experience without the grace of God is a vain, superficial thing, of no true spiritual value: and true attrition, as the Council of Trent teaches,[1] is a gift of God, an impulse of the Holy Spirit. As the fathers of the Council of Orange remind us in this very connection: "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish according to his holy will."[2]

There remains another question to be discussed in regard to the necessity of grace for the avoiding of sin—namely, the question of avoiding not merely mortal sin, but also venial sin. Of course, it is obvious that since the man who is an enemy of God cannot avoid even mortal sin he is still less capable of avoiding venial sin; and therefore it is only in regard to the sons of God that the present question can arise. What, then, shall we say of the power of the sons of God to live a life so perfect that venial sin never enters in?

[1] Session XIV, ch. 4. [2] Phil. ii 13.

The answer of Catholic theology is clear; freedom from venial sin requires something quite extraordinary, which we have not the right to expect. There are several texts of Scripture which tell us that in point of fact—and from this we can argue in regard to the question of possibility—practically no man escapes altogether from venial sin. St John tells us that "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us";[1] and in the epistle of St James we read that "in many things we all offend."[2] Everybody knows the text which says that "the just man falls seven times a day," but it would seem certain that this refers not to moral falls, but to various difficulties and tribulations. But even without this particular passage Scripture gives us to understand that the just man certainly does fall into various faults, and consequently our Saviour himself teaches us to pray that God will "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." Even the saints are expected to make this petition.

The Pelagians tried to explain away the force of the argument from the Lord's Prayer by saying that in using the expression "Forgive us our trespasses" God's servants were simply speaking in terms of humility, or in the name of the general mass of the people; but this interpretation was formally rejected and refuted at the

[1] 1 John i 8. [2] 2 James iii 2.

Council of Milevis, held in 416, when a number of other passages[1] were quoted as indicating the presence of sin in all men.

All this, it is true, has reference to the mere fact that even good men do actually fail to escape venial sin; it does not refer directly to the impossibility of escaping. But the Church has not hesitated to condemn those who asserted the existence of the power of avoiding venial sins without a very special assistance from God. In a famous decree of the Council of Trent[2] they are condemned who hold that the man who has once been justified can avoid all sins, even venial sins, throughout his whole life, without a special privilege of God, such as the Church believes to have been granted to the Blessed Virgin.

It must be noticed, however, that what we have said about the impossibility of avoiding all venial sin refers to semi-deliberate sin: as for fully deliberate sin, it is possible to avoid it with the ordinary graces of God. There is clearly a great difference between the two classes—between the venial sin which we commit with our eyes open and the sin which we commit through sudden impulse or incomplete advertence. It is difficult, indeed, to avoid the former altogether, but not impossible; but to avoid the second is quite another matter. We believe, as the Council of Trent says, that the Blessed Virgin

[1] Ps. 142, 2; Eccles. vii 21; Job xxxvii 7; and Dan ix 5, 15, 20.

[2] Session VI canon xxiii.

was free even from these semi-deliberate venial sins, and the reason for this wonderful sinlessness is to be found in her prerogative of Immaculate Conception which included freedom from the stings of concupiscence. Whether any other saint has been similarly free from venial sin, we do not know; there may be reason for thinking that such freedom was granted to St John the Baptist, who was miraculously sanctified before his birth, and to St Joseph, at least from the time of his espousals to the Blessed Virgin; but the spirit of the Church is opposed to what one may call a tendency toward pious exaggeration. As the Council of Milevis explained, even the saints say in all truth "Forgive us our trespasses."

In the face of the truths laid down in this chapter we may well pray that God may ever stretch out his hand to help us; and in the words which the Church puts upon the lips of her ministers in the office of Prime at the beginning of each day we may cry aloud: "Lord God Almighty, who hast brought us to the beginning of this day, defended us throughout its course by thy power, that we may not this day fall into any sin, but that our words and thoughts and deeds may be directed to the fulfilment of what is right in thy sight." Thus only shall we escape "the arrow that flieth in the day."[1]

[1] Ps. 90, 6.

CHAPTER III

THE NECESSITY OF GRACE FOR GAINING ETERNAL LIFE

Salutary action—Grace necessary—Sanctifying grace not always sufficient—Special question of Perseverance.

In the preceding chapter we have shown how wrong it is to suppose that man is capable of avoiding sin without the help of God. As we have seen, our fallen nature is so weak that we have need of a *gratia sanans*—that is, a grace which will heal our moral infirmities. It is one thing, however, to avoid grievous sin, and another to obtain eternal life; and in the present chapter we are to consider how far man is capable, by his own powers, of reaching the glorious end which God has set him.

We have just said that there is a difference between avoiding grievous sin and winning eternal life. Of course these two are connected in the actual order of things, but there is not an essential and intrinsic connection between the first and the second. If God had not raised man to the supernatural order and set the Beatific

Vision as the end to which he was to aspire, man might have lived a life which was free from moral fault without thereby gaining "eternal life." Now, this question of our power of gaining eternal life presents some special features which it is necessary for us to touch upon.

Once more we are concerned with a question which was raised by the Pelagians. They maintained that heaven can be won by our own efforts; our salvation, in the full sense of the word as including the glory of the blessed, is in our own hands. This raised the whole question of what theologians call "salutary acts." The term is of such importance in the theology of grace that the reader must allow us to use it, technical though it be; but of course the use of such a technical expression makes it necessary that we should carefully explain its meaning. A salutary act, then, is one which positively serves towards the attaining of eternal life. Notice the word "positively." There are actions which serve "negatively" towards the attaining of eternal life in so far as they remove distant obstacles to salvation. Thus if a man who has no religious belief makes natural efforts to live a decent moral life, he is removing certain obstacles of vice which might stand in the way of his coming to a recognition of the truth: such efforts on his part would serve only in a negative way towards his eternal salvation. But a salutary act is one which *positively* leads to

eternal life; there is an intrinsic connection between the two. This being understood, we can state the problem raised by the Pelagians thus: Can a man perform salutary actions without the grace of God? The Catechism gives us the answer: We can do no good work of ourselves towards our salvation; we need the help of God's grace. It is this answer which we must now explain and justify.

Although the Scriptures do not use the term "salutary acts," few things are more clear from the pages of Holy Writ than that we can do nothing of ourselves towards our salvation. Listen to the words of Christ himself. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing."[1]

This wonderful utterance is a perfect example of that combination of childlike simplicity and depth of meaning which is so striking a feature of the teaching of Christ. The simple peasant as he looked out over the growing plants and trees could catch the lesson which the Saviour would have him learn; yet neither mystic nor theologian will ever be able in this life to exhaust the riches of this great truth of our dependence upon Christ. Obviously Christ is not

[1] John xv 4-5.

speaking here of the way in which every man depends upon God for his existence and his natural movement. Even though a man rejects the claims of the Saviour and cuts himself off from spiritual union with him, he will still live and move in the natural order. Christ is speaking of spiritual life; of life which is of value in the eyes of God; of life on earth which will lead to life in heaven: and of such life he says that it cannot exist without union with him. "Without me you can do nothing." As St Augustine says in a passage which has become famous: "He does not say 'for without me you can do little'; but 'you can do nothing.' Whether, then, it be little or much, without him it cannot be done, without whom nothing can be done."

And this same fundamental truth is taught over and over again by St Paul. To him there had been given "this grace, to preach amongst the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men, that they may see what is the dispensation of the mystery which hath been hidden from eternity in God."[1] These unsearchable riches he explains in many ways, returning time after time to that bold figure of Christ as the head of a mystical body made up of all who believe in him. We cannot form a really holy and salutary thought by our own power. "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our suffi-

[1] Eph. iii 8-9.

ciency is from God."[1] We cannot will aright, we cannot act aright, without God. "With fear and trembling work out your salvation. For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will."[2] And the reason for this inability of ours to act, or speak, or think in a way which will be pleasing to God, the apostle explains in more than one place. In the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he explains how we are all spiritually dead through the sin of Adam and are brought back to life by Christ. "For if by the offence of one, many died; much more the grace of God, and the gift, by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."[3] Elsewhere he speaks of all men as "children of wrath,"[4] and says that we were all "concluded under sin."[5]

Thus the teaching of Christ and of his great Apostle is perfectly clear. Apart from Christ, we are spiritually dead, and no natural action of ours can have any real value unto eternal life. It is only the grace of God, which comes to us through our Saviour, which gives value to our actions and "hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved), and hath raised us up together and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus. . . . For by grace you are saved through

[1] 2 Cor. iii 5.
[2] Phil. ii 12-13.
[3] Rom. v 15.
[4] Eph. ii 3.
[5] Gal. iii 22.

faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man may glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them."[1]

Our conclusion, then, is obvious: without the grace of God salutary acts are impossible. Is this impossibility a physical or a moral impossibility?[2] Catholic theologians, bringing to the analysis of dogma an understanding that is enlightened by faith, reply that it is a physical impossibility; there is no question of a mere difficulty in performing a salutary act, we are physically incapable of such a thing. The reason is both profound and interesting. A salutary act, as we have explained, is one that positively tends towards the attaining of eternal life. But eternal life consists in the Beatific Vision, and this is altogether beyond the natural capacity of any creature, requiring a special elevation and illumination of the mind. Consequently, if there is to be an intrinsic connection between the Beatific Vision and the acts which positively tend to it, these acts must themselves be elevated above their natural condition. It is a contradiction to suppose an intrinsic connection and proportion between a merely natural act and a supernatural object to which that act intrinsically tends. Hence the conclusion is drawn that

[1] Eph. ii 5-10.
[2] For this distinction see the preceding chapter, p. 17.

our salutary acts must proceed not from our unaided natural faculty, but from the faculty as elevated above its natural condition by a supernatural gift bestowed upon it by God. Without this elevation of the faculty the act could not be performed in such a way as to tend positively towards eternal life. This is not to say that we are physically incapable of performing an act which to all outward appearances will appear just the same as a salutary act; thus a man who has no grace at all may give an alms to a beggar, just as one who is aided by grace may do; but the former could not perform the act in such a way that it would be "salutary."

But apart from the theological reasoning which has just been set out, it is clear from the doctrine of Scripture (which the Church has authoritatively expounded on more than one occasion) that we can do no good work of ourselves towards our eternal salvation; we need the help of God's grace. The thoughtful reader may here raise the question: Do we need actual grace as well as sanctifying grace that our actions may be salutary? Is not union with Christ by sanctifying grace sufficient? Before we can give a satisfactory answer to these questions we must distinguish between the acts which a man performs in direct preparation for Justification—that is, for the passing from a state of mortal sin to a state of grace—and the

acts which he performs when already in a state of grace. The acts which precede Justification, and directly prepare for it, present a special problem which will be examined in the next chapter, when it will be shown that actual grace is required for them. Here we will only remind the reader that of ourselves we can do *nothing* towards our eternal salvation; therefore we cannot of ourselves prepare ourselves for Justification, which would most certainly be to do something. These preparatory acts, then, clearly require actual grace, since by hypothesis the man who performs them does not possess sanctifying grace. But what about the salutary acts which follow Justification? Do we require actual grace for every one of them? May we not look on man as now possessing a new nature—sanctifying grace—which has the effect of making his actions supernatural and salutary without there being need of anything further in the way of actual grace? Perhaps we may put the matter less technically thus. Here is a man who has become a partaker of the divine nature by sanctifying grace; can he, without any further present help from God, perform actions which are "salutary"?

Theologians are not unanimous in the answer which they give, but the great majority reply that even the just man requires actual grace for every single salutary act which he performs. If this common opinion be accepted—and it

rests on weighty arguments—we may well stand astonished at the thought of our utter helplessness in regard to the performing of actions which are of supernatural value. Not one single salutary act unless God moves me to it by a special intervention of his power and love! And even if we do not accept this common opinion we are obliged to admit that actual grace is at least a frequent, ever-recurring necessity. In the spiritual life we cannot stand still. If we would hold what we have we must stretch out our efforts towards higher virtue, and it is certain that for this work of advancement we need a special grace of God; the possession of sanctifying grace and the infused virtues which accompany it will not suffice. Moreover, the law which God has laid upon his children requires of them much more than the natural law required, and sometimes the burden of its enactments is indeed heavy; and unless God gave us present strength to do what he bids us do, we should certainly fail. Thus it is evident that if actual grace be not necessary for the performing of every single salutary act, it is something which we constantly need.

But there is still more to be said about the necessity of actual grace in our supernatural life, and what now follows leads us to the important question of Final Perseverance. In the preceding chapter it was explained that although sanctifying grace makes us sons of God it does not

take away the weakness of our nature. We are still subject to concupiscence. True, as sons of God we can be sure that our heavenly Father will stretch out his hand to help us in our needs, but if he did not do so we should certainly fall into sin, sooner or later. At the second Council of Orange it was laid down that even in the case of God's holy ones his assistance is to be implored in order that they may persevere in their good works; and the Council of Trent condemned those who held that a man who has been justified can remain in that state of holiness without the special help of God. And this uncertainty of the position of the just man is taught us repeatedly in sacred Scripture. Our Saviour taught all men, saints as well as sinners, to pray that they may be saved from temptation: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." "Be sober and watch," says St Peter,[1] "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, strong in faith." Similarly St Paul bids the Philippians work out their salvation with fear and trembling,[2] and to the Ephesians he writes in words of solemn warning. "Brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power. Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but

[1] 1 Pet. v 8. [2] Phil. ii 12.

against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."[1]

Be it noted that these warnings were uttered for the instruction of the faithful Christians of apostolic times, who, we may be sure, were living, for the most part, holy and fervent lives. Yet even men such as these were to understand that for continuance in good they required the assistance of God, and they were to live in holy fear lest the enemies of their souls should overcome them. But there is something else to be noticed. It is one thing to have the power of performing an action, and quite another thing to do it. Now, in order that we should continue to live a good life it is necessary not only that we should receive from God a grace sufficient to enable us to resist evil, but also that we should use that power. Consequently for continuance in good we must obtain from God not merely graces which are in themselves sufficient, but also graces which we will use. And it is obviously a special favour of God that he should give us just the ones which we will use. Well, then, may the Council of Trent say that we cannot persevere *sine speciali auxilio Dei*, without the *special* help of God—a help which is something more than the mere power to persevere.[2]

[1] Eph. vi 10-12.

[2] Here we have the well-known distinction between *gratia sufficiens* (sufficient grace) and *gratia efficax* (efficacious grace). The first is a grace which gives the power to do a thing, but is

Now Final Perseverance involves all this and something more. Apart from the exceptional cases of those who have been baptized, but never reach the use of reason, and of those who are reconciled to God just before death, Final Perseverance involves two elements: firstly, a continuance in grace, and secondly death whilst in the state of grace. The first of these, as we have seen, is dependent upon the special help of God; the second is a special favour of divine Providence. Neither of these elements is in our power: not the first, as is evident from all that has been said; not the second, for we cannot arrange that the hour of death shall come at a time when we are in the grace of God. Hence the Council of Trent rightly calls Final Perseverance a "great gift"—*magnum donum*. It is a gift, because it depends upon his goodwill and in no way upon our own action; and it is indeed a great gift because it secures for us the possession of the highest good—God himself, in the Beatific Vision.

Lastly, Final Perseverance is so much the gift of God that the Council of Trent further teaches us that, apart from some special revelation, we can never be sure of it "with absolute and infallible certainty." We must ever go on "in fear and trembling," putting our trust in

not made use of; the second is one which will infallibly be made use of. Something will be said later on about the explanation of this *gratia efficax*.

God and committing ourselves to his hands. "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." Thus the Church teaches us to pray, that God may give us his graces in life and may bring us to a holy death, "being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus."[1]

[1] Phil. i 6.

CHAPTER IV

ACTUAL GRACE A FREE GIFT OF GOD

The statement explained—Justified from the teaching of the Church and from Scripture—Difficulties from Scripture—Grace and Conversion.

In the present chapter we have to show that Grace is a free gift of God; we have no natural right to it, we cannot merit it by our natural powers, and we cannot even of ourselves utter a prayer for it which will be of any real value towards obtaining it. We are absolutely dependent on God's goodwill. These are important points in the Catholic doctrine of Grace, and they are so much opposed to our natural ideas that they require careful attention.

The assertion that we are dependent upon God's free choice for the obtaining of grace is really contained in the general assertion that we can do no good work of ourselves towards our salvation. If we could command grace, as it were, by our own efforts, we should certainly be doing something towards our salvation. We might say, therefore, that there is now no need to prove that grace is entirely a free gift; yet be-

cause of the importance of the point we must make it a matter for special consideration. But first we must guard against a possible misunderstanding. We are not denying that grace can ever be merited. We are only saying that it can never be merited by any natural action of our own. If God gives us grace, by using that grace we can merit further grace; but in this case the act by which we merit is not simply our own act: it is one which is performed through the grace of God: it is supernatural, not natural. But since the first grace by which we begin to merit further graces is a gratuitous gift of God, the whole series which follows from it is itself gratuitous: ultimately it depends upon God's free gift of the first grace.

We said not only that we cannot of ourselves merit grace, but also that no merely natural petition can be of value towards obtaining grace. By this we mean that in the petitions which we may make to God by our own power —making humble profession of our misery and asking God to help us—there is nothing which he considers of any force; nothing which, to use human language, would persuade or move him to grant what is asked. This is certainly true in the present order of Providence, for we can show that God has declared his unwillingness to accept such prayers; whether or not it would be true in every possible order of Divine Providence is not so clear. Into the theoretical ques-

tion of the absolute impossibility of natural petitions having value with God, we need not enter. Let us content ourselves with the facts of the present order.

It is not difficult to show that the gratuitous character of grace is a general truth which the Church explicitly teaches. In an important passage which deals with the way in which a man prepares himself for Justification, the Council of Trent touches upon the point as follows: "The beginning of Justification in adults is to be derived from the antecedent grace of God through Christ Jesus, that is from his calling of them, by which they are called without any merits of their own."[1] This directly excludes the idea of any merit by which the first grace leading a man to Justification is won. The second Council of Orange, which was concerned in quite an especial way with these questions of grace, is, if possible, still more explicit. It is not, the Council says, because of any merits which precede grace that a reward is given to good works which we may perform; but the very performing of these good works is the result of a grace to which we have no right.[2] Further, the Council declares that if a man says that the grace of God can be given in answer to human prayer, and not that it is grace itself which makes us invoke him, he contradicts the prophet Isaias or the Apostle saying the same

[1] Session VI, ch. 5. [2] Canon xviii.

thing, "I was found by them that did not seek me; I appeared openly to them that asked not after me."[1] And, again, the same Council tells us that God does not give his grace to those who without grace ask for it, but he gives grace that they may make their petitions. From all this we see that the Church definitely lays down the points with which we began this chapter.

But let us turn to the Scriptural authority for this teaching. It is remarkably clear, and expressed in terms of great vigour. St Paul's Epistle to the Romans is full of this theme. Neither the Jewish converts by the fulfilment of their law, nor the Pagan converts by fidelity to the natural law, have merited to be called to the true faith. The third chapter of this epistle deals in an especial way with this thought, and repeatedly both here and in subsequent passages the Apostle insists on the fact that grace is God's free gift. "If by grace," he says, "it is not now by works: otherwise grace is no more grace."[2] (Here we are reminded that the very word which we use—grace, *gratia*, χάρις—signifies something which is freely given.) "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."[3] "He hath mercy on whom he will: and whom he will, he hardeneth."[4] Very definitely in the Epistle to the

[1] Rom. x 20; Isa. lxv 1.
[2] Rom. xi 6.
[3] Rom. ix 16.
[4] Rom. ix 18.

Ephesians, he says: "By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man may glory."[1] Other passages in the same sense we have already seen—we cannot think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves;[2] we have nothing which we have not received, and we must not glory as if we had not received it[3]—in a word, "it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will."[4] And in all this St Paul is but teaching the doctrine of Christ who said: "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him."[5]

Are we, then, incapable of doing a single thing which will help in any positive way towards winning the favour of God and his grace? Is man thrown on the ocean of life bereft of every means of salvation, and even of every means of struggling towards help? Yes; he is utterly helpless, completely in the hands of God, to whose mercy he owes whatever strength may come to him. We may, indeed, distinguish with theologians between negative preparation and positive preparation, allowing the possibility of the first, but not of the second; but the distinction, though helpful in some ways, may serve

[1] Eph. ii 8-9; *cf.* 2 Tim. i 9.
[2] 2 Cor. iii 5.
[3] 1 Cor. iv 7.
[4] Phil. ii 13.
[5] John vi 44.

only to obscure the truth in the minds of the ordinary reader.[1] The plain fact is, we are helpless; dead, as it were; we cannot move towards Grace.

In the course of the dispute with Pelagius it was found that there were many good men who readily rejected the main ideas of the system, but considered that statements such as those which have just been set down went too far. After all, they said, whilst it is true that man cannot perform a salutary act by his own power, and cannot offer indefinite resistance to the forces of evil, he surely can desire God's help; he can knock at the door of God's mercy as a humble suppliant; he can hope and pray for that help, without which he knows that he cannot be saved. Does not God himself bid us turn to him and he will turn to us? "Turn ye to me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn to you."[2] And are there not the examples of the Centurion, of Zachaeus, of the Good Thief, who by their humble prayers and their holy desires merited to be accepted by the

[1] Positive preparation for the production of an effect in a thing is the production in that thing of a definite disposition towards, or aptitude for receiving, the effect in question; negative preparation is the mere removal of obstacles which may stand in the way of the production of the effect—or, even more remotely, the refraining from creating obstacles. In this last sense, some writers speak of negative preparation for grace in so far as a man may for a time refrain from sin, and thus not oppose grace.

[2] Zach. i 3.

Saviour? Do we not read in the book of Proverbs[1] that "it is the part of man to prepare the soul"? And does not Christ himself say: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened"?[2]

There can be no doubt that at first sight this way of putting the matter is not without force, and we know that for a time even such a stout champion of the necessity of Grace as St Augustine was misled. But a fuller examination of the language of Scripture shows the inadequacy of the argument. St Augustine soon came to realize that the texts and examples just quoted must be understood in the light of those other texts in which our absolute helplessness is so strongly and so repeatedly emphasized. When we look at the matter in this light we see that these very prayers, desires, etc., are themselves the result of God's grace working in us, as the second Council of Orange, quoted earlier in this chapter, explained. The Centurion, Zachaeus, and the Good Thief did indeed seek God and were accepted; but they sought him because he first gave them the grace to do so. Christ does in truth counsel us to ask, to seek, to knock: but first the grace to do these things must be given to us: Christ's exhortation is

[1] Prov. xvi 1. [2] Matt. vii 7, 8.

that we should use this grace. "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish."[1]

The fact is that there are two classes of sayings in the Scriptures bearing upon this point. In one class we are told explicitly that we have nothing which we have not received, and that without God we can do nothing. In the other class, the necessity of grace being supposed, we are urged to make use of the graces given to us, and are told that if we do so we shall receive further graces. The two sets of texts are quite in harmony. The contrast between them is thus expressed by the Council of Trent. "When it is said *Turn ye to me and I will turn to you* we are reminded that we are free; when we reply *Convert us, O Lord, to thee and we shall be converted*,[2] we confess that we are prevented by the grace of God"—*i.e.*, we confess that the grace of God goes before our action and enables us to produce it.

There is an obvious and important connection between what we have here explained and the problem of conversion. Whether it be a case of trying to bring a non-believer to the recognition of the truth of the Catholic Church, or of moving a sinner to repentance, nothing can be accomplished without the interior grace of God. We may put before the unbeliever, in the most cogent way possible, the various argu-

[1] Phil. ii 13 [2] Lam. v 21.

ments by which the truth is established, but this by itself will be of no avail. How far such a man is able by the unaided light of reason to grasp the force of all the arguments which establish the motives of credibility, we need not here discuss—though we would remind the reader that it is a defined truth of the Church that man can prove many of the fundamental truths, such as the existence of God and the freedom of the will, by the natural light of reason; but it is certain that his heart will never be moved, and he will never give the assent of faith to the truths which are set before him, if the grace of God does not touch him. "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him."[1] Of course, the careful exposition of Catholic truth is an external grace of which God often makes use as a channel through which, as it were, the interior grace is poured into the soul of the unbeliever, and one man may be a better channel than another; moreover, one man may be more zealous in winning interior graces from God for the souls of those to whom he appeals; but in the end it is God, and God alone, who gives the increase. "Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."[2] And the same is true of the sinner who has fallen from grace. A new start has to be made. He has cut himself off from God, is

[1] John vi 44. [2] 1 Cor. iii 7.

living in enmity with him, and cannot do anything which is meritorious in his sight; and so a new order of grace has to be established. A free gift of God must be the beginning of this new order. Even the greatest saint pleading with a sinner can do nothing unless God first touch the heart.

These points of Catholic doctrine may at first sight seem to be hard sayings. Can it be true that we are so helpless as this? And is not the effect of such doctrines likely to be an attitude of despair, or of hopeless fatalism? Doubtless there are some people who will ask such questions in a spirit of pessimism. But he who has caught the spirit of Christianity will look upon all this in a very different light. The thought of his own helplessness will throw him back more and more on the realization of the love of God, and he will derive not merely calmness and strength, but also true joy and confidence from this his firm belief, which nothing can shake, that the God upon whom he depends is one in whom he can trust. What do we need in order that we may have absolute trust? We must have assurance on three points: that he on whom we depend is wise enough to know what is best for us; that he is good enough to wish what is really for our interests; and that he is powerful enough to obtain everything which he desires. But all these things the Christian knows of his God. Hence he is not alarmed

at the thought of his helplessness. Rather does he glory in it, in the spirit of the great St Paul when he cried out, "Gladly will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me."[1]

But here arises a question which is of vital importance. Can we be certain that we all receive from God sufficient grace for our salvation? That is the question which we will discuss in the following chapter.

[1] 2 Cor. xii 9.

CHAPTER V

SUFFICIENT ACTUAL GRACE FOR ALL

Sufficiency of Grace in regard to the Faithful—Sinners—Non-believers. Inequality of Graces. The Problem of Predestination.

THE question which we raised at the end of the last chapter is certainly a momentous one. We have seen how great is our dependence upon God's grace, and how necessarily that grace is itself dependent upon his good pleasure; what security have we, then, that the power of working out our salvation has been placed within our hands? Is it, perchance, the case that God has not willed to give us sufficient grace to enable us to save our souls?

A Catholic, at any rate, ought to take courage. He knows that by God's infinite mercy his soul has been washed in the waters of Baptism and that, through membership of the Church which is the Mystical Body of Christ, abundant graces are bestowed upon him. And if he reads the Scriptures he finds a number of passages which are full of encouragement and hope. He remembers, for example, the words of Christ:

"This is the will of the Father who sent me: that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing; but should raise it up again in the last day."[1] Or he dwells on the beautiful chapter which opens St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, in which the Apostle speaks so gloriously of the Christian vocation: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ: as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity. Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself: according to the purpose of his will: unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace."[2] Elsewhere the same Apostle speaks almost as though salvation were already secure for those who have been called to the Church: "We know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints.[3] For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son; that he might be the firstborn amongst many brethren. And

[1] John vi 39. [2] Eph. i 3-7.
[3] More exactly, "to such as are called according to his purpose."

whom he predestinated, them he also called. And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified."[1] There is no doubt in the mind of St Paul concerning the riches of grace given to all the faithful.

Hope, then, is a duty which rests upon us all. "We hope in the living God, who is the saviour of all men, especially of the faithful."[2] True, we do not know for certain that we shall persevere until the end; but we *do* know that God loves his own, and we are "confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in us, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus."[3] St Peter adds his reassurance to that of St Paul: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you."[4] And if the thought of future difficulty and temptation suggests a fear that perhaps we shall not have sufficient grace given to us in the hour of conflict, we can console ourselves with the assurance of St Paul: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it."[5]

But if it be true that all those who are living

[1] Rom. viii 28-30.
[2] 1 Tim. iv 10.
[3] Phil. i 6.
[4] 1 Pet. v 10.
[5] 1 Cor. x 13.

members of Christ's mystical body are abundantly endowed with grace, doubts may arise especially in regard to two classes of men; firstly, in regard to those who have fallen from grace by sin and been cast forth from the wedding feast, and secondly, in regard to those vast multitudes who live in unbelief, far away, it may be, from the reach of any Christian preacher. The questions naturally arise: Is the sinner ever without sufficient grace to repent? Has the infidel sufficient grace to save his soul?

In regard to the sinner, although a few theologians have held that God sometimes gives no further graces because the mind is so blinded and the heart so hardened by sin that further grace would only add to the sinner's guilt, it is certain that sufficient grace for repentance is never withheld. "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool."[1] "I will not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."[2] And even to those who continue to reject his claims upon them the Almighty declares that he still pleads with them: "I have spread forth my hands all the day to an unbelieving people, who walk in a way that is not good after their own thoughts."[3] Christ tells us explicitly that he came "not to call the just, but sinners to pen-

[1] Isa. i 18. [2] Ezech. xxxiii 11.
[3] Isa. lxv 2.

ance,"[1] and the story of his life is the history of a Good Shepherd whose principal care is for the lost sheep; of a merciful, forgiving Father whose arms are open to welcome back the prodigal. It is just because the man who continues in sin is ever resisting the Holy Spirit, that his position is so terrible; hence the vigour of St Paul's language against the obstinate sinner. "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and patience, and longsuffering? Knowest thou not, that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath."[2]

Even to the worst of sinners, then, God gives sufficient grace to enable them to repent. If not at every moment, at least from time to time and when circumstances most require it, he offers them his help. Perhaps the help is given for the resisting of some temptation, and if it is used God gives another grace; thus, by one grace after another, the sinner will be led back to God if only he corresponds. In truth the Lord "dealeth patiently . . . not willing that any should perish but that all should return to penance."[3]

Against what has just been said it may be objected that sometimes the Scriptures represent God as hardening the heart of the sinner and

[1] Luke v 32. [2] Rom. ii 4-5.
[3] 2 Pet. iii 9.

thus making it impossible for him to do penance; and also that some sins are spoken of as being beyond the possibility of forgiveness; thus, "he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them";[1] and, "It is impossible for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have moreover tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away: to be renewed again to penance."[2]

Space does not allow a detailed explanation of these and other texts of a like nature, but some general principles may be indicated in a few words. In the first place, God never positively hardens a heart; such a way of acting would be contrary to what we know of his attitude towards the sinner; but sometimes he withdraws from a sinner the more striking and more abundant graces which he gives to those who are his faithful children. Or we may say that he allows the sinner to harden his own heart. Thus in Exodus[3] we read that God hardened the heart of Pharao, but it had already been stated that Pharao had "hardened his own heart."[4] In the second place, there is no such thing as an un-

[1] John xii 40, quoting from Isa. vi 9-10.
[2] Heb. vi 4-6.
[3] Exod. ix 12.
[4] Exod. viii 15.

forgiveable sin; this is clear from the positive teaching of Scripture in regard to God's willingness to forgive, though our sins be as scarlet. Each text which appears to assert the contrary can be explained. Thus, the Fathers have explained the passage from Heb. vi 4-6 in various ways. Many have understood it to refer to the impossibility of renewing the special cleansing of Baptism; others, with perhaps greater probability, have understood it to mean that if a man has received special graces from God and then has rejected the faith which he has received, it is morally impossible for him to repent; not because the necessary grace is denied him, but because he has wilfully sinned against the light in such a way that his whole spiritual outlook is perverted. Under such circumstances it would require a sort of spiritual miracle to save him. But whatever we may say about any particular interpretation, it is quite certain that the Church rejects the idea that any sin is unpardonable.

We must now turn to the special problem of the infidel who has never had the truths of Christianity explained to him: who has never heard of Christ and his Church; who knows nothing of the channels of grace: how can such a man be said to receive sufficient grace to save his soul? The problem behind this question is all the greater when we remember that no merely natural virtue will win eternal life; nothing

short of divine faith, and the supernatural action which proceeds from it, will suffice. The problem, it must be acknowledged is certainly a serious one; what is the answer which Catholic theology gives?

That sufficient grace really is given even to the man who never comes within the reach of the influence of Christianity, there can be no doubt. There are various texts of Scripture in which we are clearly taught that God sincerely wills the salvation of all men; and how could he will their salvation if he did not give them sufficient grace to enable them to save their souls? Of these texts we will consider just one, which is quite decisive. Writing to his disciple, St Timothy, St Paul says: "I desire first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in high stations: that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all piety and chastity. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, *who will have all men to be saved,* and to come to the knowledge *of the truth.* For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus: *who gave himself a redemption for all.*"[1] St Paul is here speaking of men who belonged to the pagan world—kings and all that are in high stations—and with direct reference to them he tells us that God will have all men to be saved,

[1] Tim. ii 1-6.

and that Christ gave himself a redemption for all. Thus we are forced to conclude that God gives grace to all men, even to pagans. To explain just how God's grace reaches those who live in the pagan world may be a difficult matter, but we can rest assured that in one way or another it does reach them; an explanation, however, may be suggested as follows.

Even amongst pagans there is at least a vague sense both of the existence of a supreme being and of the moral law of right and wrong. Now there are various ways in which God can help a pagan to live according to the dictates of his conscience, and if the help thus given is used in the way intended by God, further helps will be given. Thus a pagan will grow in a desire to keep the moral law and in a spirit of reverence for the supreme being whose existence he recognizes both by the light of reason and through the traditions around him. When a man has been led thus far by God, may we not suppose that his mind will be further illumined so that he becomes capable of making a real act of faith in God as the supreme being on whom he depends, before whom he is answerable for his actions, and from whom he may look for reward or punishment? The difficulty is that there is need of an act of real faith, by which what is believed is accepted on the authority of God; and it is not easy to see how our pagan can know that God has revealed certain things to him.

But we must remember that all peoples seem to have kept some sort of tradition of a revelation made to man in the early history of our race, and surely it is possible for God to lead a pagan to a belief that certain elementary truths must have thus come from above; with the help of a further grace he can then make a real act of faith, and finally pass on (still aided by grace) to an act of love of God. Thus he can reach the state of grace and be saved. But however we explain the process we must accept the fact that salvation is really possible for all. As St Thomas Aquinas says: "It belongs to Divine Providence to provide each man with what is necessary for salvation, as long as the man himself does not raise obstacles. For if a man who had been brought up amongst the beasts of the forest were to follow the lead of natural reason in seeking good and avoiding evil, we ought to consider it certain that God would either make known to him by interior inspiration the truths which must necessarily be believed,[1] or send someone to preach the faith to him as he sent Peter to Cornelius."[2]

In what has just been said we have taken the extreme case of a man who hears nothing of the Christian message; other cases can be explained in the light of the principles laid down. All

[1] It is probable that a man such as we are considering would not be required to believe explicitly more than that God "is, and is a rewarder of them that seek him" (Heb. xi 6).

[2] *De Veritate*, xiv, 11 ad 1.

men outside the Church, whether they be Protestants, or Jews, or Mohammedans, or Pagans, receive sufficient means of salvation, and will not be condemned except through their own fault. But obviously men do not all receive the same amount of grace; to all is given sufficient, but some receive more, others less; and this inequality in the distribution of graces is one of the great mysteries which confront us. Ultimately it raises the whole question of Predestination—a question about which it may be well to say a few words in the present connection. The reader, however, is warned that the treatment must necessarily be brief. Some further explanations will be added in an appendix.

Predestination is a fact: but what exactly are we to understand by the word? Let us first see what it does not mean. In the sixteenth century Calvin put forward a false view of Predestination which has become famous. He taught that from all eternity God definitely and explicitly chose some men for eternal life, and just as definitely and explicitly other men for eternal damnation, his own glory being the end he sought in either case. Nothing that man is going to do affects in any way that terrible decree by which heaven is chosen for some, hell for others. As a necessary consequence we must say that God does not will the salvation of all men; he wills the salvation only of the elect, and the rest he positively wills to force into hell.

Such, stated in the few words, is the Calvinist theory of Predestination. It is easy to see its fundamental error—namely, its denial that God really wills the salvation of any but the elect. As we have seen in the present chapter, God wills the salvation of all and gives to all sufficient grace to enable them to save their souls; and if some men are lost this is due to their own rejection of grace and not to God's choice of their damnation. This is a fundamental truth which must be safeguarded in every theory of Predestination which a Catholic may hold. In other words, we may not say that there is a positive Reprobation of any man antecedent to his sin; it is only because of his sin that God wills his condemnation; he has had sufficient grace, he has rejected it, and therefore God condemns him.

Having thus guarded ourselves against a false theory of Predestination, let us try to get at a true one. St Thomas Aquinas says that Predestination is a plan existing in the mind of God according to which some men are to be saved; and that Reprobation is the allowing of some to be lost. Contrasting the two he remarks that Predestination includes the will to grant grace and eternal glory, whilst Reprobation includes the will to permit a man to fall into fault and to punish him for that fault.[1] Hence neither Predestination nor Reprobation is merely a matter

[1] *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 23, a. 1, 2. 3.

of God's foreknowledge of what is going to happen; each involves an element of will; in the case of the predestined God's will being to grant them first certain graces which will lead them to eternal life, and then eternal life itself as a reward; in the case of those who are not predestined his will being to permit them to fall into sin and then to punish them for it. The chief problem, of course, is with regard to those who are to be lost. If he had wished to do so, God could have arranged the circumstances of their lives in such a way that they would have been saved; but he has chosen to put them in the present circumstances of life in which he knows that they will be damned. Yet their damnation is their own fault, for they all receive sufficient grace to enable them to save their souls and they wilfully reject that grace.

Predestination, then, may be defined as an arrangement of things chosen by God in which he knows that some men will most certainly be saved and others most certainly damned, the salvation of the elect being directly desired, the damnation of the lost not directly desired but permitted. This is indeed a great mystery; but whilst we tremble at the thought of the dread issues which lie within it we must ever cling fast to the fundamental truths that God truly desires the salvation of us all, that he gives each of us the means of salvation, and that damnation can come to us only through our own fault. The

simple soul that clings to these beliefs is assuredly nearer to the mind of God than the man who vexes his soul with subtle problems of Predestination. For the rest, the whole spirit of Christianity as we find it set forth in the New Testament is one of quiet hope in God "through Jesus Christ our Lord." The restless mind may raise the questions: "Am I amongst the Predestined? And if I am not, what is the use of any effort on my part?" Better would it be to meditate on words such as these of St John, who knew so well the Heart of Christ. "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is. *And every one that hath this hope in him, sanctifieth himself.*"[1]

[1] 1 John iii 2-3.

CHAPTER VI

THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF ACTUAL GRACE

Movements of the mind and will—Immediate and Mediate impulses—All actual grace is from Christ—Union with Christ—Union with the Church.

At the end of the preceding discussions the reader may well be pardoned if he asks for a little more information about the precise nature of this Actual Grace of which we have been speaking. We defined it in our first chapter as "a supernatural gift, internal to us and of a passing nature, whereby God helps us to avoid sin or enables us to perform actions which tend towards eternal life"; but we may be asked: What sort of help is it? or, What exactly does God do to us when he gives us this help?

The answer to this last question is that when God gives us actual graces he acts upon our intellect or upon our will (or upon both) in such a way that we received new light on things, and new desires of good; or, as theologians express it, he produces in us Illuminations of the Intellect and Inspirations of the Will. To use

the language of St Paul, he enlightens the eyes of our heart, that we may know what the hope is of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints;[1] "for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God."[2] Hence our Saviour can say: "Everyone that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to me."[3] In these texts we are told that he enlightens the mind; in others we read how he moves the heart: "I have run the way of thy commandments when thou didst enlarge my heart."[4] "No man," says our Saviour, "can come to me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him";[5] and how does he draw him except by moving his heart?

These illuminations of the mind and inspirations of the will are often produced by God directly, without the medium of any creature. In all kinds of circumstances—in hours of solitude, in the midst of anxious cares, even in moments of dissipation or of wrong-doing—he touches us with his loving hand, and the great eternal truths shine out in our minds, or our hearts suddenly feel the attraction of the things of God. Thus it is that sometimes hearts are changed without apparent cause: the reason

[1] Eph. i 18.
[2] 2 Cor. iv 6.
[3] John vi 45.
[4] Ps. 118, 32.
[5] John vi 44.

is, as Longfellow puts it in a poem in which he likens God's action to the rains which have fallen far away in the mountains and have filled the half-dried torrents, because "God at their fountains far off has been raining." It is of this immediate action of God upon the understanding and the will that the author of the *Imitation* speaks when he says: "Let not Moses, nor any of the prophets speak to me; but speak thou rather, O Lord God, who art the inspirer and enlightener of all the prophets: for thou alone without them canst perfectly instruct me; but they without thee will avail me nothing." At other times God makes use of various external circumstances to produce the like effects; through the voice of another, or through the thousand and one vicissitudes of life—pain, sorrow, separation, loss, death—he speaks to the human heart and mind. But though Paul may plant and Apollo may water, it is God who gives the increase.[1] And sometimes he does not disdain to make use of our emotional and sensitive faculties in order that he may reach the inner sanctuary of thought and will. He who made the human heart knows best how to touch it, reaching from end to end mightily, and disposing all things sweetly.

Here, indeed, an interesting field of thought opens itself out before us—the consideration of the various ways in which God may illumine

[1] Cor. iii 6.

our minds and stir our desires; but we cannot now explore it further. Suffice it to have indicated in this general way the manner in which God comes to our assistance to keep us from evil and to lead us to good. Yet there is another point, closely connected with what we have been saying, to which attention may well be called, however briefly. It is this: the soul of the man who is in a state of grace is made specially sensitive to these impulses of God of which we have been speaking. Effects are produced in such a man which would not be produced in another—just as effects are produced by light on photographic paper which would not be produced on ordinary paper. This is a fact for which we cannot be sufficiently grateful. It brings God nearer to us, as it were, making his beneficent influences over us more potent, more effective; and in virtue of it we can hope that, if we are faithful to him, we shall be led on from virtue to virtue. It is the function of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost thus to prepare our souls for the touch of the Most High, and the study of these Gifts would be a most useful complement to what we are here indicating so briefly about the nature of God's action upon the soul through Actual Grace. But whether we study Actual Grace itself or those Gifts of the Holy Ghost which make us more responsive to its action within us, we shall ever find how truly we may say with the Psalm-

ist: "The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment: he hath converted my soul."[1]

The illuminations of the mind and the inspirations of the will of which we have spoken are not deliberate acts; they are produced in us apart altogether from any control which we can exercise over them. But it is a point of Catholic doctrine that the salutary act which results from actual grace is itself perfectly free. The Reformers represented man as a mere automaton, and some who claimed to expound Catholic doctrine spoke of our being under the influence of an invincible impulse which took away all real freedom; but such ideas are altogether foreign to the Catholic doctrine of grace and free will. God influences us; he creates desires in us; he moves us to action: but he lays no necessity upon us in the performing of the acts by which we work out our salvation.

There can be no need to insist upon the fact that all actual grace is the work of God; no one but the Almighty—no saint, not even the

[1] Ps. 22, 1-3. In the foregoing account of the nature of Actual Grace, the writer has prescinded altogether from a point discussed amongst theologians: viz., is Actual Grace the illumination of the mind, and the inspiration of the will, or is it rather an impression produced upon the soul from which follow the illumination of the mind and the inspiration of the will? To the ordinary reader the point may seem a mere subtlety; it has its importance, but the discussion of it is outside our limited scope.

Blessed Virgin—can produce it in our souls. But perhaps there really is need to insist upon this other fact that all grace—actual and habitual—comes to us from Jesus Christ our Lord, of whose fulness we have all received.[1] In the vision of the Apocalypse we read how the four-and-twenty ancients sang a new canticle in praise of the Lamb, "because thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests." The Lamb is Christ, and not only has he redeemed us, but he gives us every grace which we ever receive. It was this Lamb of God who said: "Without me you can do nothing";[2] and it was of him that St Paul declared: "In all things you are made rich in him . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace."[3] This is a fundamental truth of Christianity, and it is of immense importance that we should realize it. In very truth Christ in his sacred Humanity is not merely an intercessor for us before the throne of God, "always living to make intercession for us";[4] he has not merely merited for us all the grace which we receive; but he actually produces that grace in us. In the days of his life on earth he performed marvels with a touch of his hand or with a word of his mouth; thus did he give sight to the blind,

[1] John i 16.
[2] John xv 5.
[3] 1 Cor. i 5, 7.
[4] Heb. vii 25.

cleanse the lepers, heal the deaf and dumb, and free Mary Magdalen from her sins; and now in a similar way he produces grace in our souls.

This great truth is part of the wonderful lesson which Christ gave us when he proclaimed himself to be the Vine from whom we receive our life. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the Vine; you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing."[1] Consider the nature of the dependence here set before us. First of all, it is only by our union with Christ that we have any spiritual life: apart from him we are dead. But the Vine does more than give life; it fosters and sustains the life of its branches by a constant influence which it exercises upon them. And this most assuredly is what Christ does for all the branches which are spiritually united with him. The spiritual sap of life is constantly flowing from him to them. Or, to use the figure of speech by which St Paul expresses the same truth, Christ is the head of a body of which we are the members, and just as the head exercises a constant control of the members by elaborate systems of nerves which carry its messages to every part of the body, so does Christ constantly act upon us. These two

[1] John xv 4-5.

figures—the one used by our Saviour himself, the other a favourite of the Apostle who so gloriously expounded the mystery of Christ—are no mere figures of speech; they express a profound truth in graphic terms. The Council of Trent puts the matter in these more sober terms. "Christ Jesus constantly pours forth his grace (*virtutem*) upon those who have been justified as the head exercises its influence on the members and the vine upon the branches; and this grace ever precedes, and accompanies, and follows their good actions."[1]

Thus, through Christ Jesus our Lord, are all things restored. It is a wonderful scheme of things—so wonderful that in the very marvels of it we may well recognize that its fashioner is God, and not mere human ingenuity. Let us consider it for a few moments. By the sin of Adam man fell from the supernatural condition of divine sonship in which our first parent had been created; all the wonderful endowments of grace which God had intended for him were lost, and he became an outcast on the face of the earth. But God loved him with an everlasting love, and prepared for him an opportunity of being restored to grace and to glory. The central figure in the scheme of restoration was the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ our Lord. It was through Jesus that all grace was to come; there

[1] Session VI, ch. 16.

was to be "no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved";[1] "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which hath superabounded in us in all wisdom and prudence. That he might make known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in him, in the dispensation of the fulness of time, to re-establish all things in Christ."[2] And this restoration which he effects in the souls of men is indeed a glorious one. In the might of his power he draws men to himself by his immediate action upon them. He fills their souls with sanctifying grace—that wonderful supernatural quality which makes them partakers of his nature. Together with sanctifying grace he gives them the infused virtues—Faith, Hope, and Charity, and those other virtues by which new powers of action are bestowed upon them. By the Gifts of the Holy Ghost he prepares them to respond to the impulses which he intends to give them; and then he acts upon them by his actual grace, moving their minds and wills to the knowledge and the love of sacred things, and to the fulfilment of all justice. Thus, born again to the supernatural life which they had lost, and enriched with most precious endowments, they are carried along by the impulse of his grace towards that eternal destiny

[1] Acts iv 12. [2] Eph. i 7-10.

which he has prepared for them. They are in his hands—his own handiwork; nay, they are part of that Mystical Body of which he is the head—of that Vine of which he is the life. He has kept his word: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly."[1] Having become like men by taking their nature, he makes them like himself by grace.

It is well that we should think of actual grace as part of this greater fact of life in Christ. To the man who is separated from Christ, actual grace is given in order that he may be brought into union with him; to the man who is already united with Christ it is given in order that the union may be more complete, and that "rooted and founded in charity you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth: to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled unto the fulness of God."[2]

And for the perfecting of this great scheme Christ has given us the Holy Catholic Church, "which is his body, and the fulness of him who is filled all in all."[3] By means of her sacraments, her various rites, her prayers, the kingdom of God—which is the kingdom of grace—is extended within us. It is through her that we receive the primary gift of sanctifying grace,

[1] John x 10. [2] Eph. iii 17-19.
[3] Eph. i 23.

but we receive actual grace as well, for we may rightly say that it is as members of the Church that Christ gives us his help. True, actual grace is given also to men who do not belong to the Church; but it is given in order that they may be drawn to the Church, and be animated by its soul even if they never visibly belong to its body. In this respect we may see once more how well Christ's own figure of the Vine corresponds with the facts of the supernatural life of souls; for the vine draws into itself various extraneous substances which it builds up as parts of itself, and Christ by his grace draws men into union with himself that they may become part of his Mystical Body. Here, then, we who are members of the Church have every reason for humble thankfulness. Well may we thank him for the richness of that life which he has bestowed upon us; well may we have confidence in the closeness of the influence exercised over us by him of whose fulness we have all received; and well may we pray that we ourselves may be built up "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ,"[1] and that those who know him not may be brought to him who is the way, the truth and the life.

[1] Eph. iv 13.

APPENDIX

SOME MATTERS OF CONTROVERSY AMONGST CATHOLICS

Thomist and Molinist explanation of Efficacious Grace —Predestination and the prevision of merit— The attitude of the Church towards these disputes.

It is well known that the problems of Actual Grace have raised some acute controversies amongst Catholic theologians. In the course of this little work practically nothing has been said about these controversies, because it has seemed best to content oneself with a simple statement and explanation of the main points of Catholic doctrine on which all theologians are agreed. Nevertheless it would be unsatisfactory not to give to those readers who desire it some account of the principal points of debate; and therefore this Appendix is added.

I

The chief controversy bears upon the question of Efficacious Grace. By Efficacious Grace we

understand a grace which is infallibly followed by the effect to which it tends; whilst Sufficient Grace—*Merely* Sufficient Grace, as it is sometimes called—is grace which is not followed by the effect to which it tends, although it carries with it the power of producing this effect. All are agreed that God gives graces which are infallibly connected with their effect, and the question arises: How are we to explain the infallibility of this connection?

One answer is that the infallibility of the connection is to be explained simply by the fact that God foresees that if this grace is given the recipient will most certainly use it. Looked at in themselves there is no intrinsic difference between an efficacious grace and a grace which is merely sufficient; the whole difference is in this, that one grace will be used and the other will be rejected, and God knows all this beforehand. God, it is explained, altogether apart from any act of his will by which he decrees what shall come to pass, sees from all eternity what free creatures would do in every possible set of circumstances; thus he sees that if the grace A is given to me I will use it, and that if the grace B is given to me I will not use it; then he chooses an order of things in which the grace A is given, and by that very fact he knows that I will actually make use of the grace.

This is known as the Molinist explanation, de-

riving its name from a great Spanish Jesuit of the sixteenth century, and it is the theory held by Jesuit theologians. It was put forward in opposition to another theory known as the Thomist theory which is the official teaching of theologians belonging to the Order of Preachers—*i.e.*, the Dominicans, who bear the name Thomist because they base their teaching on that of St Thomas.[1] Theologians who do not belong to either of these great orders are divided on the point, some supporting one theory, some the other.

According to the Thomist school the infallibility of the connection between efficacious grace and its effect is due to something in the grace itself which infallibly brings about the result in question. Hence there is an intrinsic difference between Efficacious and Sufficient Grace. The explanation runs much as follows. Before any creature can pass from inaction to action it must be acted upon by the First Cause. Thus there must be what is called a physical pre-motion. But this physical pre-motion must fix, as it were, the particular action which follows; otherwise we should have a secondary cause, which is dependent upon the First Cause for its action, arranging for a particular action independently of the First Cause. Therefore

[1] In the controversies between the rival schools there is often keen discussion about the real teaching of St Thomas, each side claiming the authority of that great Doctor.

this physical pre-motion is called a physical predetermination; it is a movement produced in the secondary cause, and its influence cannot be affected by the being which receives it. When this physical predetermination is applied to supernatural action we call it Actual Grace—Efficacious Grace.

The great difficulty urged against this theory is that it seems to destroy all freedom; for if I am so acted upon by God that I cannot alter the movement which he produces in me and one particular act must follow, how (ask the Molinists) can I remain free? The Thomists admit that there really is a difficulty, but reply by saying that God is capable not only of producing an act in me, but also of producing a free act; or, more technically, he can produce not only the act, but also the "mode" of the act. This, no doubt, is hard to understand, but they claim that it is necessitated by the very nature of things; they assert moreover that by thus attributing the determination of the free act to God we have a true explanation of that saying of the Apostle: "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good pleasure."[1]

In their own turn the Thomists have serious objections to make against the Molinists, the principal being as follows. To leave to man the

[1] Phil. ii 13.

actual decision to correspond or not to correspond with a grace which is offered—to consent or not to consent—is equivalent to an admission that man can do something of himself towards his eternal salvation—which is Pelagianism. Moreover, the Molinist theory involves an impossible explanation of the divine knowledge; for the Molinist supposes that independently of his will God knows from all eternity what free agents would do in any possible circumstance. This is the so-called *Scientia Media.* But this knowledge, independent of the decrees of the divine will, the Thomist declares to be impossible—and the Molinist himself admits that it is a mystery. We can easily understand how God from the consideration of his own Being can see all things possible: but how can he see what would be done by free agents in all conceivable circumstances?

In place of the physical predetermination of the Thomists some theologians have suggested what is known as moral determination. The suggestion is that God acts upon the will of man not physically, but morally—that is, by way of moral inducement or encouragement—this action being of such intrinsic force that consent infallibly follows. A special application of this theory was made by St Alphonsus, who postulated moral predetermination only in the case of very difficult actions.

II

The problem of Predestination gives rise to another controversy. All theologians must agree on two points—that God has a real will for the salvation of mankind (in opposition to Calvin), and that our salvation is the result of God's grace (in opposition to Pelagianism). This being supposed, the Thomists, supported in this matter by a certain number of eminent Jesuit theologians such as the Blessed Robert Bellarmine and Suarez, explain Predestination as follows. Although God has a real will for the salvation of all men, he definitely chooses some for eternal life, and leaves the others out of his choice. Having chosen these particular souls for the glory of heaven, he prepares efficacious graces for them so that they will infallibly correspond with his impulses; for the others he prepares merely sufficient grace. Finally, reward or punishment is given according to the actions which have been performed. Of course the preparation of efficacious grace for the elect is explained differently by the Thomists and by those Jesuits who accept this general scheme of things. The former explain it by saying that God wills physically to predetermine the elect; the latter say that by means of the *Scientia Media* he knows which graces would be successful, and then decides to give just these. Some of the Jesuit writers speak of a certain internal

suitability in the grace which is efficacious, but in reality what makes it to be efficacious is the foreseen consent which the recipient will give to it. Thus there are important differences between the Thomists and the Jesuit theologians to whom we refer, but they are at one in saying that God's choice of the elect is an act of pure benevolence on his part which has nothing whatever to do with their merits or demerits. For this reason their explanation is known as the theory of Predestination *ante praevisa merita* (Predestination antecedent to the prevision of merit), because it asserts that it is not on account of their foreseen merits that the predestined are chosen. Their choice is God's free act. The chief argument for the theory is found in Scripture where those who are predestined to the glory of heaven are often represented as "elect"—*e.g.*, "They shall show signs and wonders, to seduce (if it were possible) even the elect."[1] "They shall gather together his elect from the four winds," etc.[2]

Against this theory of Predestination antecedent to the prevision of merit an obvious but very serious objection is raised by the opposing school of theologians, who hold that Predestination is *post praevisa merita*—consequent on the prevision of merit. The objection is that Predestination antecedent to the prevision of merit necessarily involves a Reprobation ante-

[1] Mark xiii 22. [2] Matt. xxiv 31.

cedent to the prevision of fault; and this would seem to be directly opposed to the doctrine defined by the Church, that God's will for the salvation of men is not limited to the predestined. In other words, the Thomist theory logically leads to Calvinism. To meet this difficulty the Thomist theologians and those who agree with them on the point at issue reply that in regard to the reprobation of the wicked there is not a positive antecedent desire for their damnation, but merely a permission or a negative reprobation in the sense that God does not choose them for eternal glory. The opposite school, however, is not satisfied, and retorts that the effect is the same whether the reprobation be called negative or positive; and they want to know how God can be said to reprobate only negatively when he deliberately provides the elect with efficacious graces, and the non-elect with non-efficacious graces.

In dealing with the objection which we have just explained some of the supporters of Predestination antecedent to the prevision of merit seem to admit the impossibility of giving a solution that is altogether satisfactory, but they insist on their claim that Predestination antecedent to the prevision of merit is clearly taught in Scripture and must therefore be accepted, even if no direct solution of difficulties is forthcoming. But the other side reply that the texts which are quoted are not satisfactory, for they

either refer only to God's free gift of grace (which all allow to be antecedent to the prevision of merit), or they do not imply a choice which is independent of merit—as in the case where some fish are chosen to be kept and the bad are cast away. "They chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth."[1] Moreover, these same theologians urge, there are other texts in which eternal glory is spoken of as a prize, a reward; and it would not really be prize or reward if it had been chosen for men antecedent to the prevision of their merits. This would seem to be the more common opinion amongst Jesuit writers, and it has the support of St Francis de Sales.

III

In these discussions every Catholic is at liberty to take whichever side he prefers, provided that he is always ready to submit to any decision which the Church may make. At the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth the principal points at issue in regard to efficacious grace were formally considered by the Holy See. Champions on each side were summoned to Rome for public debate, and the discussions went on through more than one pontificate. Ultimately it was decided to leave the two schools free to teach their own theories

[1] Matt. xiii 48.

until such time as the Holy See might issue a definite ruling in favour of the one or the other: but each side was to refrain from denouncing the other as heretical. Consequently, although the Thomist may think that the Molinist theory logically involves a form of Pelagianism, he must not denounce Molinism as heretical; and the Molinist must exercise a similar restraint in regard to Thomism, although he may not be able to see how it does not involve one of the chief errors of Calvin. Certainly neither side draws the conclusion which the other side says is logically involved in its premises; the Thomist does *not* deny freewill, nor does the Molinist deny our dependence upon God for all our salutary actions.

The history of the discussions on this question shows very clearly that Catholics are allowed great liberty of speculation when God himself has not settled a point for us by his revelation, and when the general welfare of the body of the faithful does not require that definite action should be taken. In the present case the freedom which has been allowed has certainly done no harm to the faith and practice of the faithful, and it has given occasion for some really marvellous displays of genius. But if ever circumstances should arise which make it imperative for the custody of Catholic truth that these issues should be decided by the authority of the Church, we can be sure that

the Church will speak; and if ever that day comes the world will see the wonderful spectacle of a great school of theology, with long and glorious traditions behind it, and the *esprit de corps* of a vast religious order to animate it, submitting in humble obedience to the word of Christ's Vicar on earth. Far from being a proof that Catholics do not possess that unity of belief which they claim as one of their glories, the whole attitude of the rival parties shows in reality how strong is the principle of unity amongst us; for all are ready to submit if the Church calls upon them to do so.

Date Due

~~APR 25~~			
~~APR 31~~			
MAY 18			
1/14			

1427

238.5
T62

Towers, E.

AUTHOR

Actual Grace

TITLE